Teachers’ notes - Start here

Learn to work like a historian

This website introduces primary pupils to historical sources. It helps children to think and work like historians by using objects, images and documents from the collections of the V&A and The National Archives to learn about the Victorian period.

This short starter activity introduces the learning model that guides and supports pupils' work throughout the resource. Begin with this tutorial to get the best out of the six themed units that follow.

There are four steps for dealing with sources - a simple prompt, L-A-C-E, helps pupils to remember them.

The LACE process

Pupils need to feel confident using LACE to work through this resource. In each unit LACE will help them answer a key historical question such as, what was life like for children in Victorian times?

Two online presenters guide pupils through each unit. They introduce a range of different historical sources and ask various prompt questions at each step of the LACE process. There is some variation between these questions, to accommodate the different types of sources used in this resource, but they retain the same focus throughout:

> **Look:** Describe what you can see
>
> **Ask:** What questions do you need to ask, and answer, to make sense of what you have seen?
>
> **Conclude:** What have you learned about the issue that you are investigating from this source?
>
> **Expand:** What more would you like to know about? How can you find out?

The steps in the LACE process are not always mutually exclusive. In fact, evaluating evidence is often an iterative process. Pupils may sometimes engage with the

different steps in a non-linear way. When this happens it is not a problem. The main purpose of this approach is to encourage pupils to develop different types of questions to progress their understanding of the evidence.

Look

Encourage pupils to make observational comments at the **Look** stage. For example, 'I can see some children playing with hoops in this photograph.' Or 'This is a letter about somebody's house.' It is important that children can describe the **content and appearance** of the source as fully as possible.

Ask

At the **Ask** stage encourage pupils to become more analytical in order to **make sense of their observations.** They need to ask and answer questions like, 'What would it have been like to play with these hoops?', 'Why was this photograph taken?' Or, 'Why was this letter written?'

Conclude

At the **Conclude** stage encourage pupils to **draw some conclusions** about the key historical question that they have been asked from the source they have examined. For example, when asked to consider what a historical source can tell us about what play and leisure time was like for Victorian children, pupils might answer 'This source suggests that some Victorian children had fairly simple toys, which might have been easy to make. These toys were not as complicated or expensive as ones we have today.'

Expand

At the **Expand** stage pupils should start to think more widely about the other sources that could help them to **find out more about a particular aspect of Victorian life**. For example, 'Would other photographs or paintings showing children help us find out more about play in Victorian times? If so, where can I find these sources?'

Secondary information for sources is minimal, often with only brief captions and dates. This is to ensure that pupils interrogate historical sources themselves without additional context.

Objects

The LACE approach requires pupils to look carefully at objects. Support this with useful prompts such as:

- It is helpful to find out what an object is made of because it might tell us about the difference between life in the past and the present
- If we discover what the object was used for, we can understand how and why things change
- If we don't have the same object today, why not? What has changed? Why do some objects survive?

Avoid asking pupils to date objects as this often very difficult to work out from the evidence alone.

Documents

Documents can include letters, diaries, newspapers, Government reports, advertisements, plans and maps. When pupils look at documents encourage them to appreciate the difference between **what** is being said and **how** it is being said. Pupils will also benefit from considering the effect of the language, tone and style used within a document, and who its intended audience might be.

Transcripts and glossary

There is a complete transcript of every document to ensure that they are accessible. Pupils might use these where document content is straightforward, but fonts or handwriting are hard to decipher. There are also simplified transcripts where content is more complex, for example where documents use archaic syntax or vocabulary.

Teachers may find it useful to encourage children to look at the complete transcripts first. Pupils can then check their understanding by reading the simplified version.

Pupils can also listen to audio transcripts, which can help to bring the documents to life for them.

There is a glossary, if needed, at the end of transcripts.

Images

Victorian paintings, portraits, drawings and posters can reveal much about their era. It is helpful to discuss with pupils the idea that artists choose to paint a picture in a particular way in order to give us a message. So it is important to explore key aspects of the composition of an image at the observational stage. Similarly, teachers can discuss with pupils what the photographer might be trying to say in a photograph. Is it posed deliberately? Is it true that the camera never lies? Pupils may also like to consider the purpose and audience for which the image - whether painting, photograph or poster - might have been created.

Saving and printing work

Pupils should save or print their work. This can be used as evidence of learning, and will enable teachers to evaluate understanding of the LACE methodology in particular. Encourage pupils to use their notes to help them with an extended piece of work. Each unit includes extension activity suggestions.

Source credits and captions

The Teacher's Notes for each unit provide credits and brief contextual captions for all the sources that pupils encounter. These are listed in the order in which the sources are featured.

This additional information is given to teachers so that they can support children working through the LACE process with extra guidance and information, when necessary.

Historical source credits and captions for Start here

- Photograph of the Duchess of Albany with young Duke and other children with rocking-horse, 1891 (TNA: COPY 1/405 f130)

- Handwritten letter sent to the Board of Health complaining about deaths caused by the stench from street priveys, 1849. Transcript provided (TNA: MH 13/261)
- Photograph showing the seaside and esplanade at Bognor, 1884 (TNA: COPY 1/369 f99)
- Woman's satin shoes trimmed with silk ribbon made in England, c1850-75 (V&A: 2006AW2421-01)
- Vita Nova Washstand by William Burges (1827-1881). Carved, painted and gilded wood made in England, 1880 (V&A: 2006AM8879-01)
- General view of the interior of Crystal Palace showing the Great Exhibition building, with Osler's famous crystal fountain, various exhibits and the visiting crowds. The building was designed to allow elm trees, seen on the right, to grow inside the building. Lithograph by John Absolon, 1851 (V&A: 2006AG1668)
- Painting called Contrary Winds by Thomas Webster (1800-1886), of children playing in a cottage. Oil on panel. Great Britain, 1843 (V&A: 2006AM5336-01)
- Extract from a page of advertisements from the Illustrated London News, June 1869. This advertisement is for a company providing mourning clothes on request. Transcript provided (TNA: ZPER 34/54)